



SB 284

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Sen Moore, Rep. Abercrombie, members of the Human Health Services committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of SB 284. My name is Dr. Suzanne Lagarde. I serve as the CEO at Fair Haven Community Health Care, a Federally Qualified Health Center which has served the residents of southern CT for over 50 years and which in the past year, provided services to over 31,000 primarily minority, low income individuals.

I would like to address the issue of equity. A lot has been stated and written about this administration's and the current legislature's commitment to equity. While I applaud the efforts to date, I need to make it clear that true equity will never be achieved until we recognize the more than 100,000 CT residents who are not eligible to receive the most basic of human rights, namely the right to quality health care. I refer to immigrants who are not eligible for Medicaid enrollment.

We have spent the past two years enduring a pandemic of unprecedented proportions. During the pandemic, we spoke of how we are "all in this together". However, we are not responding as if we "are all in this together". During the pandemic, many of the front line workers who kept us fed, kept our streets clean and our garbage hauled away, and in many instances who cared for our children are not eligible for basic health coverage. At our health center, when COVID vaccines became available, we mounted a massive door to door campaign that knocked on over 5000 doors and successfully got thousands of people vaccinated. This campaign was carried out in large part by over 400 volunteers, many of whom are undocumented. Their actions literally saved lives. Despite our lack of commitment to them, they stepped up. Yet we continue to turn our backs on these neighbors, people who pay taxes and many of whom have been a part of our communities for decades. This is morally wrong.

SB 284 is a step in the right direction. While I would have preferred to see a proposal that would provide health care to all, SB 284 extends the right to health care to all immigrant children. Please pass this legislation. Future data will show that not only will this coverage save lives, in the end it will avoid unnecessary ED visits and hospitalizations and will be cost effective. This is the moment where CT residents should stand united in showing the world that health care is a human right and not a privilege for a select few.

Respectfully submitted,

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CEO Fair Haven Community Health Care